

Preparing a Project Plan

Many organisations start the process of seeking funding for a project with a good idea, but often without any clear thinking on how they can achieve their particular aims. Preparing a project plan will allow you to define the starting position, the end goal and all the steps in between, in a logical, practical way. It also helps you to plan ahead and to really understand what is achievable.

A good project plan can:

- help to turn a vision into a reality
- demonstrate that the project is well thought out, well designed
- include enough information and evidence to sell the idea to someone who has the means to make it happen i.e. a funder
- test the feasibility of any one given project

Preparing a project plan involves a process of preparing, thinking, researching, budgeting and designing and then often a period of re-thinking, re-budgeting and re-designing. It is best done over a period of time and involving more than one person in your group or organisation.

Project plans will differ depending on the type and cost of the project, for example the plan for a community building will look very different to the plan for a developing a support service for people with mental health needs. Similarly, a plan for a project that is likely to cost £1,000 will look very different to a plan for a project that costs £150,000, however there will be some similarities. Evidence and justification will be required for both, it's just that the level of detail will be different.

Ultimately, a good project plan will help you to prepare the answers to many of the questions that are likely to be asked by funders.

What should be included in a project plan?

A description of your organisation: plus an outline of your aims and objectives, stating who, where, when and how you currently operate and some evidence of your track record (with previous funders) and achievements. It may be useful to include a summary of your organisation's previous experience and some evidence of the experience and skills of your board, management committee or volunteers.

A description of the new project (or what you want to secure additional funds for): provide a clear description of what you want and what the project will do, how it will be delivered, and what the project hopes to achieve in the long-term. Describe how the project will work and be managed.

Evidence of need: One of the most important things that should be included in your project plan is detailed evidence of need, particularly if your project will be seeking grant funding. You will need a good base of evidence which demonstrates there is a need or demand for your project. If you cannot demonstrate that there is a clear need for a project, why should a funder support you? You may need to do some research at this stage to provide well founded facts and figures and concrete evidence that your project is needed and that it fills a gap in services that no-one else is currently fulfilling. See Information Sheet 4.4 Evidencing Need and Defining Outcomes.

Preparing a Project Plan

People and benefits: You should include a description of which people will benefit from the project, what their needs are and how this project will help to address those needs. You should explain how they will benefit and what difference the project will make.

Costs and funding: You should put together a detailed breakdown of all costs for the project (see Information Sheet 5.1 Budgets) which should include accurate estimates for all items to be purchased, any staff costs should include employers costs such as national insurance and pension contributions and also contributions towards the cost of managing the project (Full Cost Recovery).

VODA's Finance Team can help you with budgets and other financial planning. Contact us on 0191 643 2630 or email finance@voda.org.uk for more information.

Fundraising Plan

Your project plan should be written and integrated into your organisation's other plans, including its overall strategy and any fundraising strategy you have (see Information Sheet 4.2 Developing a Fundraising Strategy).

Within your project plan, a fundraising plan should identify all possible funding sources, as well as any of your own funds that will be used. The fundraising plan should include the amount that is possible to raise from any one particular funder and the timescale for their decision making processes. Some funders have grant decision making panels which meet on a monthly basis whilst others may only meet annually, so it is important to identify who meets when.

You will also need to think about what will happen at the end of the project. If it is likely to continue, say how you plan to ensure this happens - who might fund it or will it fund itself? Is the project time-limited? This is often termed your exit strategy.

Project management arrangements

This section should include a description of how the project will be managed and what the staffing requirements of the project are. If you want a grant for a member of staff you will be required to produce a job description and maybe even a person specification, depending on the funder. See Information Sheet 5.5 Costs of Employing a Worker.

VODA can help you with job descriptions and the costs related to employing a worker. Contact us on 0191 643 2626 or email admin@voda.org.uk for more information.

Other points to remember

- It is important to remember that the level of detail required in your project plan will be reflected in the amount of funding you are looking to secure.
- Make sure it is well written and persuades people of the value of your organisation and its work.



Information Sheet 4.3

Preparing a Project Plan

- Tailored your plan to each funder you are applying to - they are likely to have different priorities and you should explain how your application fits their priorities.
- Ensure that your plan does not contain jargon – people reading the plan may not know anything about your subject area.
- Try not to waffle or over embellish and try to be as concise as possible.

See VODA's range of Information Sheets on fundraising for more information or contact our Development Team on 0191 643 2626, email development@voda.org.uk for advice on project planning and funding.

North Tyneside VODA
Queen Alexandra Campus
Hawkeys Lane, North Shields
NE29 9BZ